measures wherever necassary. However, in a number of cases the exporters were found to have made unjustified claims for enhancement of DEPB rates allowed to their products and have brought pressure on the Government by alleging that incorrect/non-transparent DEPB rates were fixed. Such unjustified demands have not been acceded to by the Government.

(d) Various Export Promotion Schemes like Duty Exemption Scheme, EPCG Scheme, EOU/EPZ- Scheme, Gem & Jewellery Scheme are available during the current fiscal year.

Increase in Trade Deficit

640. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the trade deficit has widened from 3.4 billion dollar in the first eight months of 1997 to 6.7 billion dollar for the same period in 1998;

(b) if so, what are the reasons for this; and

(c) what are Government plans to contain it?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) As per the provisional data of the Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence & Statistics, the trade deficit during April-November, 1998-99 was US $6701 million as against a trade deficit of US $3369 million during the same period last year.

(b) and (c) The widening of trade deficit has been due both to a slow down in export growth and to increase in imports over exports. Export promotion measures are continuously being taken by the Government through changes in policies and procedures for providing an export friendly environment, involvement of States in export promotion and consultation with trade and industry. A number of steps have been taken to promote exports which include lowering of interest rates on export credit, reduction in transaction cost through decentralisation and simplification of procedures and various other measures as enumberated in the Exim Policy. Steps have also been taken to promote exports through multilateral and bilateral initiatives, identification of thrust sectors and focus regions. The Government is also initiating action through several measures to facilitiate investment in sectors with strong export potential, encourage diversification of India's export basket, address infrastructure shortcoming, improve export-facilitation measures and thus enhance the overall competitiveness of Indian exports. The Government is according high priority to exports and all necessary. steps are being taken to put exports on high growth trajectory.

Export of Rice

641. SHRI K.M. SAIFULLAH: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Food Ministry has sought quantitative restrictions on export of rice;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the action taken to ensure buffer norms before export of rice?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE); (a) and (b) Review of Export Import Policy of agricultural products, including rice, is an on-going process and accordingly policy interventions are made as and when considered necessary keeping the interests of domestic producers, consumers and industry in view. Consultations in this regard between various Ministries including Ministry of Food & Consumer Affairs and exporters/importers are held from time to time. As per the current EXIM Policy, of rice (both basmati and non-basmati) is free, subject to registration of contracts with Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA)

(c) The total minimum stock to be maintained by public agencies under the new buffer stocking *policy* w.e.f. 30-10-98" and stocks available are as under:

Million Tonnes

Date	Rice		Wheat		Total	
	Buffer noms	Stocks with public agencies	Buffer norms agencies		Stocks with public	
1st April	11.80	13.05	4.00	5.08	15.80	18.13
1st July	10.00	12.04	14.30	16.48	24.30	28.51
1st Oct.	6.50	8.96	11.60	15.24	18.10	24.20
1st Jan.	8.40	11.69	8.40	12.70	16.80	24.39

(Source: Min. of Food.)

विदेशी व्यापार का आकलन

642.**श्री राज मोहिन्दर सिंह**:

श्री बलवन्त सिंह रामूवालिया:

क्या वाणिज्य मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) क्या यह सच है कि सरकार ने चालू वित्तीय वर्ष के दौरान अप्रैल से दिसंबर तक की अवधि में विदेशी व्यापार का कोई आकलन किया हैं;

(ख) यदि हां,तो उक्त अवधि के दौरान देश से कितने मूल्य का निर्यात और आयात किया गया;और

(ग) किन-किन वस्तुओं का कितने-कितने मूल्य का आयात और निर्यात किया गया ?

वाणिज्य मंत्री (श्री रामकृष्ण हेगड़े): (क) और (ख) विदेश व्यापार आकड़ों का संकलन और विश्लेषण नियमित रूप से किया जाता है । वाणिज्यिक आसूचना एंव सांख्यिकी महानिदेशालय से प्राप्त अनन्तिम आकड़ों के अनुसार,अप्रैल-दिसम्बर,1998 के लिए निर्यात और आयात का मूल्य निम्नवत हैं:-

	वर्ष में) (रू.करोड़	आयात		निर्यात	
		(मि.डा.में)	(करोड़ रूपए में)	(मि.डालर में)	
अप्रैल-दिस.,98	132447	31583	101850	24287	
अप्रैल-दिस.,97	107523	29485	91192	25007	

(ग) नियोत की मुख्य वस्तुओं के ब्यौरे और कीमत संलग्न सारणी में दी गई है । (**नीचे की देखिए**) अन्य जानकारियां डीजीसीआईएण्ड एस के प्रकाश " भारतीय

देश व्यापार सांख्यिकी "(मुख्य वस्तुंए व देश) 1998 में दी गई हैं,जिसकी प्रतियां संसद पुस्तकालय में उपलब्ध हैं।